

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week five

Brian Housman, Stephanie Acker, Alexis Kruza, and Kim Messenger
February 26, 2012

Welcome to Week Five

For those of you who are just jumping into the guide now, here are a few quick notes:

1. Brief introductions to the format of this guide and to the Gospel of John can be found at the beginning of Week One.
2. This guide can be found in various electronic forms. You can find us as a blog at dailybibleguide.wordpress.com or in PDF at bostonvineyard.org/classesprograms/leap-of-faith. Or, download the app, for Android or iPhones: Blue Ocean Leap of Faith.
3. **Special family-friendly materials can easily be found by looking for the red text.** These materials include three 'For you and your family' Taking It Home sections per week, and a Spiritual Practice of the Week for Families.

Spiritual Practice of the Week for Families: Fasting and Service.

Fasting is giving up something to make more room for God in your life, or just to tell God, 'You're more important to me.' Consider not eating a particular food or not doing a favorite activity this week. Use that time or space to have a conversation with God instead, or to serve another person. For example, you might give up TV or video games and use that time to pray or to help someone in your family by doing their chore, helping with their homework, or some other loving action. Or you could fast as an entire family, by eating an especially simple supper--bread and soup, for instance--and donating the money that your family would have spent on the rest of the meal to a food pantry. Keep your eyes and ears open for unexpected ways that God is speaking to you or multiplying your actions. At the end of the week, think about what you liked and what you might not have liked about this particular spiritual discipline. Share your thoughts with each other.

Monday, March 26—John 12:34-50

³⁴ The crowd responded, "We understood from Scripture that the Messiah would live forever. How can you say the Son of Man will die? Just who is this Son of Man, anyway?"

³⁵ Jesus replied, "My light will shine for you just a little longer. Walk in the light while you can, so the darkness will not overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going. ³⁶ Put your trust in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of the light."

After saying these things, Jesus went away and was hidden from them.

³⁷ But despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done, most of the people still did not believe in him. ³⁸ This is exactly what Isaiah the prophet had predicted:

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide
week five

“Lord, who has believed our message?
To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?”

³⁹ But the people couldn’t believe, for as Isaiah also said,

⁴⁰ “The Lord has blinded their eyes
and hardened their hearts—
so that their eyes cannot see,
and their hearts cannot understand,
and they cannot turn to me
and have me heal them.”

⁴¹ Isaiah was referring to Jesus when he said this, because he saw the future and spoke of the Messiah’s glory. ⁴² Many people did believe in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn’t admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. ⁴³ For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.

⁴⁴ Jesus shouted to the crowds, “If you trust me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me. ⁴⁵ For when you see me, you are seeing the one who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark. ⁴⁷ I will not judge those who hear me but don’t obey me, for I have come to save the world and not to judge it. ⁴⁸ But all who reject me and my message will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken. ⁴⁹ I don’t speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it. ⁵⁰ And I know his commands lead to eternal life; so I say whatever the Father tells me to say.”

Points of Interest

- ‘How can you say the Son of Man will die?’--I’m impressed that they pick up that his talk about seeds and being lifted up is referring to his own death. I might not have, except that I know the end of the story--oh, and John gave me the extra little hint: ‘He said this to indicate how he was going to die’ (12:33).
- ‘Just who is this Son of Man, anyway?’--what Jesus is saying doesn’t fit with their understanding of the Messiah. So, now they start to wonder if ‘Son of Man’ is a prophetic character distinct from the Messiah, one they somehow have missed up until now.
- ‘My light will shine for you just a little longer’--I don’t understand why Jesus doesn’t say, ‘Well, yes, I will live forever; but first I have to die.’ He’s basically saying, ‘Enjoy me now. I won’t be around for long.’ That doesn’t seem to give much incentive to start following him at this point.
- ‘and was hidden from them’--it seems that Jesus’ mysterious protector is able to slow down the course of events a little bit still.
- ‘exactly what Isaiah the prophet had predicted’--Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10. We may be tempted to think that the people’s rejection of Jesus is a mark against him being the Messiah. Actually, this rejection is all a part of the script, as outlined by the prophets.
- ‘But they wouldn’t admit it for fear’--in their heart of hearts, more people believe in Jesus than are willing to admit it publicly. The political costs of coming out for Jesus are just too high for

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week five

them. Sadly, they choose to pass up on the spiritual and eternal benefits Jesus is offering, because they're unwilling to pay the price in their ordinary life.

- 'will be judged on the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken'--Jesus doesn't have the time to or interest in judging people who don't listen to him. He has better things to do: bring light into the lives of people who want him to do so. That doesn't mean there are no consequences to refusing to listen. The consequences come in the fact that what Jesus is saying is actually true: 'Those who love their life in this world will lose it' (12:25). Eventually, everyone will run out of life of their own. If they haven't asked Jesus for his eternal life, they won't have any life at all.

Taking It Home

- For you: I am intrigued by the religious leaders who believed in Jesus but were too scared to say so. I'm sure we could talk for hours about how the whole story could have played out differently for everyone if these influential people had simply spoken up, but right now I'm most struck by the personal costs for them of being held back by fear for their reputation. Where in your life are you scared about what other people think? Are there aspects of your reputation that feel at stake because of Jesus in some way? Ask Jesus to show you if there are ways you are being held back by fear. If there are, tell him what you're afraid of (I think he would want to know), and maybe tell him you're sorry. Ask Jesus for his help in moving past that, and ask him to show you what he is offering you. Consider telling Jesus that you care more about him than whatever aspects of your reputation feel at stake.
- For your six: In the same way that Jesus was hidden from the crowds that were out to destroy him, ask Jesus to hide your six from people or situations that are out to destroy them. Ask Jesus to let none of Satan's plans for your six come to pass. Pray that your six would sense Jesus' protection today.
- For our church: In our city, as in Jerusalem in Jesus' time, there are all sorts of questions about who Jesus is and how exactly he fits in. In this passage, Jesus' response seems to be simply, 'Try me. You'll like me'; for those who decide to trust him, it'll be like the light is turned on in a dark place. Ask Jesus to strengthen our church's trust in him. And pray that our life would indeed be brightened up in exactly the way he promises.

Tuesday, March 27—John 13:1-20

¹ Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. ² It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. ⁴ So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, ⁵ and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

⁶ When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week five

⁷ Jesus replied, “You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.”

⁸ “No,” Peter protested, “you will never ever wash my feet!”

Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you won’t belong to me.”

⁹ Simon Peter exclaimed, “Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!”

¹⁰ Jesus replied, “A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you.” ¹¹ For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

¹² After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? ¹³ You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. ¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

¹⁸ “I am not saying these things to all of you; I know the ones I have chosen. But this fulfills the Scripture that says, ‘The one who eats my food has turned against me.’ ¹⁹ I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will believe that I Am the Messiah. ²⁰ I tell you the truth, anyone who welcomes my messenger is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me.”

Points of Interest

- ‘he loved them to the very end’--Jesus is now in the final sprint; he wants to finish strong. He will keep doing, to the very end and to a greater degree than ever before, what he has been doing all along. He does not let his coming death distract him; instead, it inspires him.
- ‘to betray Jesus’--I think the idea here is that an insider would be able to help the religious leaders navigate this mysterious web of protection around Jesus.
- ‘you will never ever wash my feet!’--Peter is aghast that his superior would do something so lowly as wash his feet. He has it right that Jesus is his superior, but he doesn’t really understand what that means. Master and slave isn’t really the right analogy for their relationship. The one Jesus most recently used is shepherd and sheep. A shepherd looks to the needs of the sheep, not the other way around.
- ‘does not need to wash, except for the feet’--Peter then gets carried away in the other direction. Jesus responds, ‘Let’s not go overboard. We’ll just wash what’s dirty.’ I tend to think this is a mood-lightening joke. There may be some spiritual metaphor Jesus is making; but I don’t understand it, and John doesn’t explain it.
- ‘Do you understand what I was doing?’--Jesus piques their interest by doing the demonstration first, then explaining. I think the answer to his question is that Jesus is showing them how they will be taken care of once he’s gone; they now must care for one another.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week five

- ‘Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them’--rather like with the people who believe in Jesus but won’t admit it in yesterday’s passage, the knowledge is no good unless it’s put into action.
- ‘The one who eats my food has turned against me’--Psalm 41:9. As far as I know, this psalm is not generally thought of as a messianic prophecy; David, the author of the psalm, could very well be talking about any of the several traitors in his own life. Nonetheless, Jesus takes it as being about him; so what do I know? Perhaps he chooses this among David’s various traitor psalms because of what comes after:

LORD, have mercy on me.

Make me well again, so I can pay them back!

11 I know you are pleased with me,
for you have not let my enemies triumph over me.

12 You have preserved my life because I am innocent;
you have brought me into your presence forever (Psalm 41:10-12)

Betrayal and death are not the end of the story.

- ‘I tell you this beforehand’--once again, Jesus wants them to know that even when things look bad, they’re actually proceeding according to plan. It’s important for them to know this for a couple of reasons. First of all, Jesus does not want them to be unsettled by Judas’ betrayal. Secondly, he’s preparing them for the fact that they too, once he’s gone, won’t always be popular and well-received; that doesn’t mean they have gotten things wrong.

Taking It Home

- *For you and your family: If you want, you could reenact this story by having a family foot-washing. Jesus washed his disciples’ feet to set an example of how he’d like his followers to serve one another. Ask God for something you could do to serve or help someone else in your family today, then do it.*
- **For your six:** As Jesus’ life comes to end, he somehow maintains focus on what’s truly most important to him. Ask Jesus to give the same focus to your six. Pray that they wouldn’t be distracted by whatever feels urgent, but that they would really pursue what matters most to them. Ask Jesus for opportunities to talk with your six about the things that matter most to each of you in life.
- **For our church:** We’re such an egalitarian society that I think it’s hard to picture just what a big deal it was for the disciples’ superior Jesus to bend down and wash their feet. I wonder if it would be like Bill Gates or President Obama showing up at your house and then insisting on cleaning your bathroom or taking out your trash. It kind of seems unthinkable, right? Ask Jesus to give our church the same humility to lovingly and patiently serve and honor others in eye-popping ways.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide
week five

Wednesday, March 28—John 13:21-14:7

²¹ Now Jesus was deeply troubled, and he exclaimed, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!”

²² The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he could mean. ²³ The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to him to ask, “Who’s he talking about?” ²⁵ So that disciple leaned over to Jesus and asked, “Lord, who is it?”

²⁶ Jesus responded, “It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl.” And when he had dipped it, he gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ When Judas had eaten the bread, Satan entered into him. Then Jesus told him, “Hurry and do what you’re going to do.”²⁸ None of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant. ²⁹ Since Judas was their treasurer, some thought Jesus was telling him to go and pay for the food or to give some money to the poor. ³⁰ So Judas left at once, going out into the night.

³¹ As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus said, “The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him. ³² And since God receives glory because of the Son, he will soon give glory to the Son. ³³ Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can’t come where I am going. ³⁴ So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

³⁶ Simon Peter asked, “Lord, where are you going?”

And Jesus replied, “You can’t go with me now, but you will follow me later.”

³⁷ “But why can’t I come now, Lord?” he asked. “I’m ready to die for you.”

³⁸ Jesus answered, “Die for me? I tell you the truth, Peter—before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.

14:1 “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.”

⁵ “No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!”

Points of Interest

- ‘Now Jesus was deeply troubled’--Jesus has just finished telling them not to be unduly rattled by the coming betrayal; when the betrayal comes, it just means that things are proceeding according to plan. Nonetheless, it’s an emotionally upsetting circumstance. It doesn’t cause Jesus to doubt, but it does make him sad.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide
week five

- ‘disciple Jesus loved’—traditionally, Bible interpreters take this to be John the author. They speculate that he’s trying to keep himself anonymous for reasons of humility. If so, calling himself ‘beloved’ seems a curious way of going about it. I think it would indeed be a bit arrogant if John were claiming to be loved over against the others. But perhaps what he’s saying is, ‘If you were there, in my spot, sitting next to Jesus at the table, the thing you’d most feel is overwhelming love.’ He’s special, not so much in that he’s uniquely loved, but in that he was privileged to be right there. Anyone so close to Jesus would feel the same love. John is loved, and so is Peter, and so are any of us. By not naming himself, he’s inviting us to put ourselves in his place: ‘insert name here,’ as it were.
- ‘It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl’--this seems like an elaborate way of going about it. He could just whisper, ‘It’s Judas.’ I think he’s consciously acting out Psalm 41:9 (see 13:18). It almost serves as a cue for the action to start.
- ‘None of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant’--I think John means no one but Peter and the beloved one, who are in on the sign. But I wonder what Judas knows. What does he think Jesus is sending him out to do?
- ‘God will be glorified because of him’--I think Jesus is glorifying God by trusting God with his very life. The glory Jesus receives in return is the glory of being raised from the dead. Jesus keeps talking about being ‘lifted up’ (3:14, 8:28, 12:32). It seems to me that the raising up will happen on three levels:
 1. he’ll be literally raised up on a cross;
 2. he’ll be raised from the dead;
 3. and he’ll be ‘raised up’ as an example of faith in God and as a source of eternal life.
- ‘you can’t come where I am going’--not just the religious leaders, but even the disciples can’t--at least, immediately--follow Jesus.
- ‘Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples’--love for one another is not just the way that they’ll be cared for in Jesus’ absence. It’s also the badge that they’re Jesus’ deputies. When people see how they love one another, they will say, ‘There’s something Jesus-like about these people.’
- ‘you will deny three times that you even know me’--Peter is farther along in his belief in Jesus than those ones who are afraid to admit it because of fear of the Pharisees (12:42), but even he is not quite prepared to follow Jesus all the way.
- ‘There is more than enough room in my Father’s home’--this is not, ‘Adios,’ but, ‘Hasta luego.’ They will be separated for a while, but it’s only to be together again and forever. Maybe that’s why Monday he told people that time is short (12:35); he needs to know whether or not to prepare a place for them. How many guest beds, clean sheets, and towels will he need while he’s away getting ready for people to come and stay with him? Anyone who doesn’t speak up now could end up sleeping on the couch.
- ‘you will always be with me where I am’—this reminds me of when Jesus and the first disciples just met one another. They ask where he lives, he invites them over, and they stay the night (1:38-39). Jesus is now going away to prepare for a more glorious, everlasting sleepover.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide
week five

- ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’--this reminds me once again of Jesus saying to Nathanael in the very beginning: ‘you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth’ (1:51). Jesus himself is somehow the pathway to heaven. They may not yet know exactly how to follow the path, but they do know the path.

Taking It Home

- For you: How would you feel if your name preceded the clause, ‘the disciple Jesus loved’? You might not even feel like a disciple—not to mention especially loved--but for kicks let’s try it:

_____, the disciple Jesus loved.
(your name)

How does that settle with you? Does it feel true, or hard to accept? Ask Jesus to show you his love for you in a real way. Don’t settle for just knowing it in your head; ask Jesus to really speak to the core of your being about his love for you. Today look for ways that Jesus is showing you how much he loves you. A fun way that many people practice receiving Jesus’ love is called ‘soaking.’ It’s a good way to force yourself to receive from Jesus. Here’s how to try it: Play some quiet music, lie down or be somewhere you are super comfortable, ask Jesus to be with you, and then just lay there. Your only job is to keep your heart attuned to Jesus; that’s it.

- For your six: Pray today about anything that is troubling your six. Ask Jesus to help your six in those situations. Pray that your six would trust Jesus in the midst of whatever is troubling them.
- For our church: Being part of an entire community where everyone deeply loves and cares about everyone else sounds utterly remarkable, doesn’t it? It is, of course, one of those ‘easier said than done’ things, but I still think it’s worth aiming for. Of all the things we could be known for at our church, being known as a place that genuinely loves people does sound pretty compelling. Ask Jesus for his help to do it. Ask Jesus to fill us with so much of his love that it would easily overflow to others.

Thursday, March 29—John 14:8-31

⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

⁹ Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? ¹⁰ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. ¹¹ Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

¹² “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. ¹³ You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week five

¹⁵ “If you love me, obey my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. ¹⁸ No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. ¹⁹ Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. ²⁰ When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.”

²² Judas (not Judas Iscariot, but the other disciple with that name) said to him, “Lord, why are you going to reveal yourself only to us and not to the world at large?”

²³ Jesus replied, “All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. ²⁴ Anyone who doesn’t love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me. ²⁵ I am telling you these things now while I am still with you. ²⁶ But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

²⁷ “I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid. ²⁸ Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again. If you really loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, who is greater than I am. ²⁹ I have told you these things before they happen so that when they do happen, you will believe.

³⁰ “I don’t have much more time to talk to you, because the ruler of this world approaches. He has no power over me, ³¹ but I will do what the Father requires of me, so that the world will know that I love the Father. Come, let’s be going.

Points of Interest

- ‘Lord, show us the Father’--this has to have been frustrating for Jesus. His entire nature and purpose is to be a picture of the Father: ‘No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us’ (1:18). Everything he does shows the Father. But even his closest friends don’t quite understand that.
- ‘Just believe’--I think this is Jesus’ answer to Thomas’ complaint in yesterday’s passage (14:5) that they don’t know the way.
- ‘will do the same works I have done, and even greater works’--Jesus’ death will not be an end to his own life. It also won’t be an end to his work. He plans for signs of eternal life to continue and to increase, through the disciples.
- ‘so that the Son can bring glory to the Father’--this is the next step in the Father and the Son’s plans to bring glory to one another. Once they bring glory by showing how well they care for one another, they will take it even farther by bringing the disciples into the mix.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week five

- ‘ask me for anything in my name’--this reminds me again of when Moses asked to see God’s glory, and God responded,

‘I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose’ (Exodus 33:19).

Jesus brings glory to the Father by his generosity to the disciples.

- ‘another Advocate, who will never leave you’-- this won’t keep happening to them. The next divine mentor will never have to leave. Good shepherd to the end, Jesus makes sure to arrange for a permanent replacement as he leaves.
- ‘he lives with you now and later will be in you’--soon they will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. At the very beginning, this is what John the Baptist said Jesus would accomplish (John 1:33).
- ‘you are in me, and I am in you’--I don’t know exactly what this means, but I do note that Jesus is describing his relationship with them in the same terms as he describes the Father’s relationship with him. Jesus is inviting the disciples right into the family with the Father and him.
- ‘Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me’--all along, we’ve talked about the remarkable lack of interest Jesus has shown in being a good follower of the rules. Here, rules make something of an entrance. It turns out that you do have to follow his rules if you want to have anything to do with him. His rules, however, seem to be quite a different set than the ones with which the Pharisees are concerned. As far as I can remember, the only commands Jesus has given his disciples are to trust him (12:36), to love one another (13:34), and not to worry (14:1). ‘Trust me,’ ‘Take care of one another,’ and, ‘Don’t worry,’ have a much different feel from, ‘If you carry a mat on the Sabbath, we’ll kill you.’
- ‘and not to the world at large?’--a fair question. John has told us that Jesus’ aim is ‘to bring together and unite all the children of God scattered around the world,’ (11:52) not just a handful of people in a single room. Where does the rest of the world come in?
- ‘we will come and make our home with each of them’--there’s some confusion about who is moving in with whom. In yesterday’s passage, Jesus talked about taking them to the Father’s house (14:2-3). Now, Jesus and the Father are coming to live with the disciples. Regardless, they’ll all be together.
- ‘you would be happy that I am going to the Father’--he’s not dying. He’s moving on into the eternal life he has been describing.
- ‘He has no power over me’--it’s not that the devil is stronger. Jesus could resist him if he wanted. But Jesus is purposefully using the devil toward the Father’s ends.

Taking It Home

- For you: Have there been any times in your life when you have experienced deep, grounding peace? What level of peace or anxiety do you feel right now? Ask Jesus for his gift of peace—peace for your mind and for your heart. If you, like me, err on the anxious side and have a hard time receiving this gift that really does sound like the best thing ever, ask Jesus for help taking

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week five

what he is offering you. Is there a specific area in your life where you are particularly lacking peace? Especially ask God for peace in that very circumstance.

- For your six: Are your six open to experiencing anything miraculous from God? Or would that totally weird them out? Ask Jesus for more of the Holy Spirit for your six. Ask Jesus to help your six be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Ask Jesus for opportunities to talk about and experience the Holy Spirit with your six.
- For our church: If you had any big, huge outrageous dream for our church what would it be? Today, throw caution, logistics, and practical-how-to-plans to the wind, and ask Jesus for whatever that big dream is.

Friday, March 30—John 15:1-27

“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³ You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵ “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷ But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸ When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

⁹ “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! ¹² This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³ There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. ¹⁶ You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. ¹⁹ The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. ²⁰ Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. ²¹ They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the One who sent me. ²² They would not be guilty if I had not come and spoken to them. But now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Anyone who hates me also hates my Father. ²⁴ If I hadn’t done such miraculous signs among them that no one else could do, they would not be guilty. But as it is, they have seen everything I did, yet they

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week five

still hate me and my Father. ²⁵ This fulfills what is written in their Scriptures: ‘They hated me without cause.’

²⁶ “But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. ²⁷ And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.

Points of Interest

- ‘cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit’--a gardener wants the most fruit they can get from their vines. To increase the yield, they’ll cut off any branches that aren’t growing fruit, so that valuable resources aren’t being sent away from fruit-making. Like a gardener, God is looking for some sort of product in people’s lives. When God doesn’t see what God is looking for, God stops wasting energy in that direction.
- ‘he prunes the branches that do bear fruit’-- Even fruit-bearing branches are pruned, so that the energy goes toward the fruit and not unnecessary leafiness. Every branch faces some cutting. The choice is between being lopped off and being pruned.
- ‘apart from me you can do nothing’ --I think he’s referring specifically to their fruit-making capacity. It’s hopeless--and unnecessary--to attempt this on your own.
- ‘you may ask for anything you want’--whereas unfruitful branches get cut off, fruitful ones get whatever they need, no questions asked.
- ‘Yes, your joy will overflow!’--if you’re doing it right, this type of life is richly satisfying.
- ‘This is my commandment: Love each other’--this seems to be the fruit the Father is looking for. Wherever the Father sees love, he pours out more love. When the disciples choose to love one another, they tap into the very love Jesus and the Father have for one another. Soon, love is flowing in all directions: Father to Son; Son to disciples; disciples to Son; disciples to one another. The love keeps getting bigger.
- ‘If the world hates you’-- not everything will be rosy for the disciples. Some people are not fans of love and joy, apparently.
- ‘they have seen everything I did, yet they still hate me’--Jesus did his best to give a clear picture of what God is all about: unfailing love and faithfulness (1:17). He turned water into wine, multiplied bread, healed the sick, forgave sinners, and all along kept saying that these things were all just tiny glimpses of what he could really do. None of it got through. Despite the clear picture of goodness, many just aren’t able to see. It will be no different for the disciples.
- ‘But I will send you the Advocate’--they don’t need to take notes. The Holy Spirit will remind them.

Taking It Home

- *For you and your family: What happens when a branch falls off a tree? (It dies.) Jesus says we need to stay connected to him, just like a branch stays connected to a tree. What sort of spiritual practices help us stay most connected to Jesus? Think about the spiritual practices we’re trying during this Leap of Faith. Which have helped you and your family stay better*

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide *week five*

connected to Jesus? Has your family found one or two that you'd like to keep doing after the Leap of Faith? Talk together about your thoughts.

- For your six: Ask Jesus to show his love to your six today. Pray that they would begin to grasp his love as something personal and something good for them. Ask Jesus also to surround your six with people who truly love them.
- For our church: While pruning sounds better than being cut off entirely, the thought of pruning still does make me slightly wince. It sounds necessary, but uncomfortable. On behalf of our church, tell Jesus that we want to bear good fruit, that we're willing to be pruned, and that we really want his help in the process. Ask Jesus to help us recognize good fruit, to recognize when pruning is necessary, and to embrace the pruning process.

Saturday, March 31—John 16:1-33

"I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith. ² For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. ³ This is because they have never known the Father or me. ⁴ Yes, I'm telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning. I didn't tell you earlier because I was going to be with you for a while longer.

⁵ "But now I am going away to the One who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. ⁶ Instead, you grieve because of what I've told you. ⁷ But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. ⁹ The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. ¹⁰ Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. ¹¹ Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.

¹² "There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. ¹⁴ He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'

¹⁶ "In a little while you won't see me anymore. But a little while after that, you will see me again."

¹⁷ Some of the disciples asked each other, "What does he mean when he says, 'In a little while you won't see me, but then you will see me,' and 'I am going to the Father'?" ¹⁸ And what does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand."

¹⁹ Jesus realized they wanted to ask him about it, so he said, "Are you asking yourselves what I meant? I said in a little while you won't see me, but a little while after that you will see me again. ²⁰ I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy. ²¹ It will be like a woman suffering the pains of

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide
week five

labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world. ²² So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy. ²³ At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. ²⁴ You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.

²⁵ "I have spoken of these matters in figures of speech, but soon I will stop speaking figuratively and will tell you plainly all about the Father. ²⁶ Then you will ask in my name. I'm not saying I will ask the Father on your behalf, ²⁷ for the Father himself loves you dearly because you love me and believe that I came from God. ²⁸ Yes, I came from the Father into the world, and now I will leave the world and return to the Father."

²⁹ Then his disciples said, "At last you are speaking plainly and not figuratively. ³⁰ Now we understand that you know everything, and there's no need to question you. From this we believe that you came from God."

³¹ Jesus asked, "Do you finally believe? ³² But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. ³³ I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

Points of Interest

- 'you will be expelled from the synagogues'--things are about to get much worse for them in this life. They'll be outcasts and fugitives.
- 'I didn't tell you earlier because I was going to be with you'--it's not a surprise to Jesus that they are heading into rough times. He has known for a while, but hasn't thought it was the right time to tell them. He's had higher priorities. Now, though, before he leaves, he's downloading everything he can.
- 'it is best for you that I go away'--he said earlier that it's good news for him that he is going away (14:28). Now, he says that it's also good news for them.
- 'of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment'--I think the idea here is that some people will realize after Jesus' death, his resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit that they were wrong about Jesus. The Holy Spirit will give those people another chance to say, 'Yes,' to eternal life.
- 'All that belongs to the Father is mine'--things might be looking grim for the disciples in this life, but in eternal life it turns out that they're friends (15:16)--practically adopted siblings--of a very wealthy man.
- 'your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy'--it's unclear to me whether Jesus is referring to his resurrection, or to their own deaths (and full entrance into eternal life). The reaction he's describing sounds very much like what happens when they see him risen from the grave. But it also seems like he's talking about something that will happen later than three days from now.

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week five

- ‘you will ask the Father directly’--up until now, Jesus has been giving them, in himself, pictures of the Father. Now, or shortly, he will be introducing them into direct relationship.
- ‘using my name’--it’s like they’re on the list for some very exclusive party--or not exactly on the list themselves, but they can get in by dropping his name: ‘Just tell them you’re with me.’
- ‘the Father himself loves you dearly’--the circle of love from yesterday’s passage expands one more step. Now there’s also love directly from the Father to the disciples.
- ‘I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me’--a lot of crazy things are about to happen. When they do, Jesus wants them to be able to say, ‘It’s just like Jesus told us it would happen,’ instead of, ‘Oh, no. What went wrong?’

Taking It Home

- **For you and your family:** Jesus says that the Holy Spirit knows everything, even the future; and the Holy Spirit is willing to share those things with us. What’s something you want to know? Ask God, and listen to see if the Holy Spirit gives you an answer.
- **For your six:** Pray that your six would have an expanded imagination of what they could ask for out of life. Jesus says that the Father is willing to do absolutely anything for anyone who asks in Jesus’ name. Pray that your six would have God-sized hopes in their lives.
- **For our church:** The longer Jesus is with the disciples, the more he seems to tell them. It seems like he only tells them things as they are ready. Ask Jesus to expand our capacity as a church to listen to him. Pray that we would be good stewards of what we hear from God. Pray specifically today for the Sunday Morning Prayer team, the Intercession team, Extended Prayer team, the Healing Rooms, and all of the various classes that try to help people hear from Jesus in a profound way. Ask that these would in fact be really great spaces for people to hear from Jesus, and ask Jesus to raise up lots of leaders to help sustain these awesome spaces.

Sunday, April 1—John 17:1-26

¹ After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. ² For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. ³ And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. ⁴ I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.

⁶ “I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, ⁸ for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.

⁹ “My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. ¹⁰ All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. ¹¹ Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide
week five

given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. ¹² During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

¹³ “Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. ¹⁴ I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵ I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. ¹⁶ They do not belong to this world any more than I do. ¹⁷ Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. ¹⁸ Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹ And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

²⁰ “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹ I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

²² “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. ²³ I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. ²⁴ Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

²⁵ “O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶ I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.”

Points of Interest

- ‘I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do’--this prayer is like Jesus’ final status report before departing. He wants the Father to know that he has successfully completed his to-do list. He also has a list of things that he is now handing off to the Father to continue.
- ‘bring me into the glory we shared before the world began’--Jesus was able to raise Lazarus from the dead, but he won’t be able to raise himself; he’ll be dead. He’s putting his life into the Father’s hands.
- ‘they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you’--the Father commissioned Jesus to be a good shepherd to the disciples. He has faithfully done so, and in doing so gained a whole new level of affection for and devotion to them. So now he asks the Father to take special care of them as he leaves.
- ‘They do not belong to this world’--it seems that Jesus uses ‘world’ here in several different ways. Maybe, like me, you’re finding it a little challenging to keep straight what he means in any given instance. Let’s see if I can make a stab at it:
 - ‘before the world began’--in this instance, he merely seems to be talking about the material universe;

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide

week five

- ‘the world hates them’--here it seems ‘the world’ is Jesus’ name for the devil’s domain. It’s basically the opposite of ‘eternal life.’ It reminds me of Jesus’ testy tit-for-tat with some people about Abraham’s children (8:31-47), in which the people call themselves God’s children and Jesus responds that they are actually the devil’s children. I think the devil’s family there and ‘the world’ here are synonyms. Confusing as it is (since he also uses the word in other ways), I think Jesus calls the devil’s domain ‘the world’ because, in John’s gospel at least, the devil’s main work is to get people to settle for merely earthly satisfaction, instead of reaching higher for the real satisfaction Jesus offers. They want mere bread instead of the bread of life, water instead of the Spirit, to be Abraham’s genetic heirs rather than his spiritual heirs. They are satisfied with what this world has to offer;
- ‘I am sending them into the world’ and ‘so that the world will believe’--here, ‘the world’ seems to refer to wider human society, beyond just our little group, whether that little group be the disciples or the entire Jewish nation. In this regard, ‘the world’ is Jesus’ eventual aim. He eventually wants to include ‘the world’ in the loving relationship he shares with the Father and is now inviting the disciples into.

So, in summary, Jesus came to the world, to send his disciples into the world, to invite the world to leave the world behind and join him in eternal life. What could be clearer?

Taking It Home

- For you: Maybe I’m just a sucker for to-do lists, accomplishments, and lots of processing but I love Jesus’ recap to God the father. If for nothing else, it’s also a helpful synopsis as we near the end of John. Take some time to think back on the past year of your life and create a recap of your own. What happened? Were there some distinct seasons you noticed (like John, I’m speaking spiritually here, not meteorologically)? Were there certain places you really saw Jesus come through? Or certain things you did that seemed to bring you closer to Jesus? Further from Jesus? What were the highlights? The disappointments? Talk to God about what life has been like for you the past year. Ask Jesus for his insight into what’s been going on in your life. Ask him to show you where he was working and what he is doing. Ask Jesus if there are any key lessons he wants you to remember from this past year.
- For your six: The great pity in John’s gospel is that so many of us, so much of the time, get stuck in ‘this world,’ the world of shallow appetites and limited benefits. Pray that this wouldn’t happen to your six. Ask Jesus to give them tastes of what Jesus calls ‘eternal life’: truly, deeply satisfying life that lies just beyond what we can see or grasp ourselves.
- For our church: Pray that our church would bring God glory. If the word *glory* for you--as it does for me--too easily gets a little lofty and angelic, here is how Merriam Webster defines it:
 - a** : praise, honor, or distinction extended by common consent : RENOWN
 - b** : worshipful praise, honor, and thanksgiving <giving *glory* to God>

The Good News according to John—a daily Bible guide
week five

Ask Jesus that among us God would get all of the honor God deserves, that our times together on Sunday morning would be filled with exuberant praise to God, and that everything we do as a church would bring recognition of and thanksgiving to God in the wider world.